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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002629

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: ALLAWI'S DECISION TO WITHDRAW MINISTERS: LOTS OF
NOISE, LITTLE IMPACT

REF: BAGHDAD 1942

Classified By: Political Counselor Matt Tueller for Reasons 1.4 (b) and
(d)

¶1. (C) Summary: On August 5, Minister of Human Rights Wijdan Salim from Ayad Allawi's Iraqiyya list informed emboffs that Allawi ordered his ministers to suspend participation in Ministerial cabinet meetings. This would impact four Iraqiyya Ministers) Salim, Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi (Minister of Communication), Raid Jahid Fahmi (Minister of Science and Technology), and Mohammed Abass al-Uraybi (Minister Without Portfolio). According to Iraqiyya representatives, Allawi made the decision because of Iraqiyya's continued marginalization and the Prime Minister's failure to pursue non-sectarian policies that foster reconciliation. While Iraqiyya members agree in general with Allawi's frustrations with the GOI, the decision to suspend participation in cabinet meetings is not unanimously supported by all of Iraqiyya's ministers; Minister Fahmi said on August 6 he will continue to attend cabinet meetings. Allawi's decision increases pressure on the GOI, but it is unlikely that it will force a solution to the current political stalemate or serve as the catalyst for changing GOI leadership. End Summary

ALLAWI ORDERS HIS MINISTERS TO SUSPEND PARTICIPATION

¶2. (C) In an August 5 interview with al-Sharqiya Television, Iraqiyya Council of Representatives (CoR) member Izzat al-Shahbandar emphasized that Iraqiyya Ministers have not withdrawn from the government or the political process. He noted, however, that Allawi did instruct his ministers to abstain from cabinet meetings and that Iraqiyya members are "deliberating" on this issue. Various Iraqiyya contacts told Emboffs that Allawi instructed his Ministers to work at their Ministries but report directly to President Talabani instead of the Prime Minister. In an August 6 interview with al-Iraqiyah television, Iraqiyya CoR member Osama al-Najafi said that suspension of participation in cabinet meetings is "a first step towards a complete withdrawal from the government," although again this would require continued deliberation among all of Iraqiyya's various members.

UNANIMOUS SUPPORT AMONG IRAQIYYA'S MINISTERS LACKING

¶3. (C) Allawi's decision, while anticipated for a number of days, was made without the full support of all of Iraqiyya's Ministers. In an August 6 meeting with poloff, Minister of Science and Technology and Communist Party member Raid Jahid Fahmi said that he was the only Iraqiyya Minister to attend the cabinet meeting earlier that day. While Communist Party leaders share many of Allawi's frustrations, he said, they did not agree with suspending participation in the cabinet meetings. In an August 6 meeting with Meghan O'Sullivan, Special Assistant to the President, Iraqiyya member and former Transitional National Assembly speaker Hachim al-Hassani speculated that of the four Ministers affected by

the decision only the Minister of Communications, Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi, would prolong his absence from cabinet meetings.

REASONS FOR THE SUSPENSION: MARGINALIZATION AND FRUSTRATION

¶4. (C) Allawi's timing, according to Ministers Salim and Fahmi as well as Iraqiyya CoR member Maysoon al-Damluji, stems from continued frustration at Iraqiyya's marginalization within the political process and the GOI's failure to fulfill its promises of reconciliation due to sectarian policies and agendas. Allawi and Iraqiyya representatives have voiced these concerns repeatedly (reftel) and expressed their perception that Iraqiyya has been marginalized within the political process. Despite these actions, Iraqiyya continues to be "sidelined" and its frustrations ignored by the Prime Minister, al-Damluji told poloff. In a separate conversation with poloff on August 6, Minister Salim noted that four months ago Iraqiyya sent a letter to the Prime Minister describing its concerns about GOI policies and anger about Iraqiyya's increasingly limited role within the GOI. The Prime Minister "never responded," Salim said.

¶5. (C) While acknowledging Allawi's previously stated grievances with the GOI, al-Hassani speculated that Allawi made the decision as a "face-saving" measure given his previous threats that he would suspend participation and Tawafuq's recent withdrawal. In an August 6 meeting with the Ambassador (septel) President Talabani attributed Allawi's timing to pressure from Arab states who urged Allawi to follow through on his threats to stop participation, especially since Tawafuq withdrew its ministers.

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¶6. (C) Comment: Allawi has spent the past several months criticizing the GOI in general, and the PM specifically, for being ineffective and for promoting sectarian agendas. Similarly, Allawi has often complained that both he and his party were being marginalized by the PM and other GOI leaders. Yet the timing of Allawi's decision -- only a few days after Tawafuq bolted the government, and on the cusp of an expected meeting of the political bloc leaders -- strongly suggests that Allawi is trying to demonstrate his relevancy in the political process -- perhaps by getting a seat at the table at the leadership meeting, and almost certainly with an eye toward replacing Maliki if possible. End Comment.
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